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RHEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY IA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHMFISS/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHMFIUU/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

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TAGS: PTER KISL KIRF PREL ASEC PGOV NL

SUBJECT: WILDERS KORAN FILM: DUTCH GOVERNMENT STILL
ANTICIPATES MARCH RELEASE

REF: A. THE HAGUE 133

1B. THE HAGUE 102

1C. THE HAGUE 61

Classified By: Classified by Global Issues Chief Susan Garro for reason
s 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) MFA Terrorism and New Threats Department Deputy Director Andre van Wiggen told GlobalOffs during a February 21 meeting that the Dutch government still anticipates that parliamentarian Geert Wilders will release his film on the Koran in March; he said they have no information about the specific date. He confirmed that the communications strategy outlined to us in previous discussions was still in play: following the release of the film, the Dutch government would move quickly to "distance itself" from Wilders and the film, stressing that the government does not share Wilders' views on Islam or the Koran. He said the government would also likely make a statement that it intended to refer the film to the appropriate legal authorities to determine whether the film violated any Dutch laws on hate speech or slander. He said that the wording of any statement on legal action, and which official makes it, would depend on the content of the film. He said it was unlikely that Dutch government statements on the film would make any reference to "condemning" the film, as the Dutch consider "condemnation" to be a legal term which could be applied only if a court took action to suppress the film after release.

¶2. (C) Van Wiggen confirmed that the Dutch were coordinating with their EU partners to issue a statement on the film soon after its release, as stated by Deputy National Counterterrorism Coordinator Lidewijde Ongering in her February 20 briefing for USG agencies in Washington. He said that MFA had contacted both the European Commission staff and the Slovenian Presidency to urge that the EU be prepared to issue a statement, most likely in the form of an open letter signed by all member states. He said there had been no discussion yet of the content of such a statement.

¶3. (S) Van Wiggen also confirmed Ongering's statement that the government was concerned about the possibility of "Stage

2" violence being sparked in the Netherlands in the event there is widespread violence in the Middle East or other majority Muslim countries in aftermath of the film's release, although they still do not anticipate significant violent reactions at home immediately after the release of the film. He said that the Terrorism Coordinator's Office (NCTb) and intelligence services were keeping a close watch on this possibility. He noted that in addition to proactively urging Dutch Muslims to react calmly to the Wilders film, a number of Dutch Muslim organizations had stated that they did not "take direction from abroad," meaning that they would resist calls from Muslim groups in the Middle East or elsewhere to respond violently to Wilders' film.

¶4. (C) Van Wiggen raised EUR Senior Advisor Farah Pandith's recent meeting at the Dutch Embassy in Washington, at which he noted the Embassy had sought her ideas on possible outreach to U.S. Muslim groups on this issue. He said that MFA would not prohibit the Embassy from pursuing contacts with U.S. Muslims, but stressed that any such meetings would have to be "informal and low-key." He questioned whether U.S. Muslim groups were sufficiently influential in key Muslim majority countries to have an impact in discouraging violence in response to the film. Van Wiggen welcomed continued close communication on our respective planning for the release of the film. He noted that the Dutch recognized that there was also a force protection issue involved; for that reason, he said, the Dutch permrep to NATO had made a recent statement in Brussels on Dutch government preparations for the film.

¶5. (C) In a separate meeting with econoffs on February 22, Economic Ministry trade officials said that they were

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concerned about potential adverse consequences of the film on Dutch exports and investment interests in the Middle East. In particular, they noted that exports could be adversely affected if there were a boycott of Dutch products similar to that against the Danes following the cartoon crisis in 2006. They added that Dutch firms have extensive and high visibility investments in the logistics, petrochemical and agricultural/food processing industries in the region.

¶6. (C) Comment. Van Wiggen's comments about Dutch government preparations for responding to the film reconfirmed what we have heard previously from him and other Dutch government contacts. He was clearly skeptical of the value of an outreach effort by the Dutch Embassy in Washington to U.S. Muslim groups. Our sense is that MFA has taken a similarly cautious approach to public outreach in other countries as well, in part due to concern that the government be seen to speak consistently with one voice on the issue, both before and after the film is released, and in part to avoid further increasing the film's pre-release profile.
Schofer